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AFRICAN ITEMS

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PERCEVAL GIBBON

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## AFRICAN ITEMS



# AFRICAN ITEMS

A Volume of Verse

BY  
PERCEVAL GIBBON



LONDON  
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.  
1903





## DEDICATION

*DEAR MADONNA, this to thee,  
This my little book of rhymes,  
Memories of urgent times,  
Let me offer gratefully.*

*First-born of my fantasy,  
A little thing, but still mine own,  
Low of voice, of timid tone,  
A child of my captivity.*

*Lady, judge it tenderly;  
'Tis a palmer's offering,  
'Tis a sacrifice I bring  
Thus to my divinity.*

SOUTH AFRICA,  
May, 1903.



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
ULTIMA THULE        -        -        -        -        -	1
HOME THOUGHTS FROM AFRICA        -        -        -	3
MOOIMEISJES        -        -        -        -        -	7
AN ANSWER        -        -        -        -        -	9
THE DEAD MAN        -        -        -        -        -	10
TO A BOER LEADER        -        -        -        -        -	14
CONVALESCENCE        -        -        -        -        -	16
KOMANI        -        -        -        -        -	17
KOODOO OUTSPAN        -        -        -        -        -	18
JIM        -        -        -        -        -	19
BLUE PETER        -        -        -        -        -	21
ON THE HILLTOP        -        -        -        -        -	22
BUSHMAN PAINTINGS        -        -        -        -        -	25
TABLE MOUNTAIN        -        -        -        -        -	29
JAN VAN RIEBECK        -        -        -        -        -	31
SEA-FARERS        -        -        -        -        -	35

	PAGE
THE VELDT - - - - -	37
VOICES OF THE VELDT - - - - -	40
LITTLE THINGS - - - - -	46
THE VOORLOOPERS - - - - -	47
THE HOBNAILED TROUBADOUR - - - - -	49
THE NUN - - - - -	56
MIMOSA - - - - -	57
A PERSONAL NOTE - - - - -	58
THE EXILES - - - - -	62
THE HARPER - - - - -	64
A MEETING - - - - -	65
EVENING - - - - -	68
BROWNING, (EX-AFRICA) - - - - -	70
LAURELS - - - - -	72
WHAT NEED? - - - - -	76
HOMEWARD BOUND - - - - -	78

## ULTIMA THULE.

OVER the rolling ocean's rim,  
    Away below the line,  
Where fathoms deep the ghoul-fish swim,  
And the tiger-shark, gray, gaunt and grim,  
    Basks with his pilots nine,  
We know of an island, you and I,  
A gossamer cloud in a summer sky,  
Where the dreams of faery do not die,  
    And the isle is yours and mine.

Girt with a strip of silver sand,  
    And a filigree fringe of brine,  
Is a land where the virgin lilies stand,  
A choir of vestals, hand in hand,  
    Knee-deep in jessamine ;  
Where the roses riot o'er pastures broad,  
And the ferns foregather on shaded sward,  
Where the kingly bee and the butterfly lord  
    Sit throned on the fragrant vine.

Do you forget the dainty craft  
Wherein we sought that utmost isle ?  
Trimmost of clippers, fore and aft,  
For wave to cradle or wind to waft  
O'er many a shining mile ;  
When the day was bright and the breeze was  
light,  
When the squalls came out of the sky at night,  
When we drove like a gull through moonshine  
white,  
Or a hawk o'er the hooded Nile.

Do you forget the Isle of Fays ?  
You were a princess and I a knight.  
I crept to your side by dangerous ways,  
And kissed your eyes till you woke in amaze  
To the dawn of a new delight.  
Right royal were you on your canopied throne,  
In white and purple, with golden zone,  
And we ruled a land that was all our own  
The space of a summer night.

Over the edge of the outer sea,  
Long leagues below the line,  
Is the land where our freighted fancies flee,  
The goal of our dreamy Odyssey,  
A land that is yours and mine ;

An island mottled with green and gold,  
Ruled by a princess seven years old,  
And warded well by a warrior bold,  
A knight of summers nine.

---

HOME THOUGHTS FROM AFRICA.

DEAREST, my heart is in mourning,  
My soul is in pain,  
And I yearn to the hills and the heather  
And the sea beach again ;  
To the rain-riven crags of the mountain,  
Close under the lea,  
Where the gulls go up to the ledges  
And down to the sea.  
From this land of the limitless vistas  
And hard iron skies,  
Where the veldt and the clouds fade together  
Out of the range of the eyes,  
I long for the shouting Nor'Easter,  
The salt of the gales.  
Dear, send me to comfort my exile,  
A word out of Wales !



Is it all as we knew it together ?  
Is it yet as of yore ?  
Do the breakers, the crested free-lances,  
Gallop up to the shore  
With their tumult of battle and laughter ?  
Can you see how the ships  
Stagger seaward away under tops'ls  
From the murderous lips  
Of the tiger-fanged bay and its currents,  
Where the galleon was drowned,  
And the drift wood we stored for the winter  
Came safely aground ?  
And up to your hearth in the evening  
Does the clamour still reach  
Of the hoofs of the sea on the shingle,  
The scream of the beach ?

I can taste it with lips of remembrance,  
And the eyes of my love  
Refashion the desolate marches,  
The storm drift above,  
The bay with its narrow horizon,  
The cliffs which confine  
A world that leaves nothing to heaven,  
Your world, dear, and mine !  
The beach, like a glistening gangway,  
Melts far in the gray,

And hastening from sand into silver,  
    So trembles away;  
While the shawls of the cockle-wives gleaming,  
    Red drops on the haze,  
Are like blood on a priestly apparel,  
    Assaulting the gaze ;  
And yonder, far out and hull under,  
    Scarce seen for the foam,  
Some prodigal child of the ocean  
    Goes seaward and home.  
There are rocks, too, strewn widely to westward,  
    By weed overgrown,  
A river cascading in granite,  
    Tempestuous stone,  
Where the charge of the breakers is shattered,  
    Their crest overcast,  
And the raiders that leagured our fastness  
    Are broken at last.

I can see in the deeps of my fire  
    Our cave in the rocks,  
Whence we watched the white horses stampeding  
    In strenuous flocks ;  
And the seventh wave is ever the biggest,  
    Deep-bosomed and bright,  
A phantom of luminous opal  
    That froths into white.

And he thunders a saga in passing,  
For you and for me,  
Of the wonderful doings out yonder  
At large in the sea.  
Then evening walks over the waters,  
Like Christ on the lake,  
And strides past the beach and the marches  
With night in its wake.  
I wonder will you have forgotten  
How oft and again  
We strove with the night for its secret,  
Nor wrestled in vain?  
Two children that probed the eternal,  
And strong in our youth,  
With God for a kindly familiar,  
So won to the truth.

Dearest, I think you'll remember,  
When heart-deeps are stirred,  
The love which we bore one another  
That needed no word.  
'Twas a part of the life that possessed us,  
Pervaded the days,  
And though childhood be reft of its treasure  
That memory stays.  
As the scent of the incense inhabits  
An altar of old,

As honour is strong and immortal  
When the ashes are cold,  
One dream is the friend of my exile,  
Nor lapses nor pales :  
Your face that exulted to seaward,  
Home yonder in Wales !

---

## MOOIMEISJES.

I MIND me of a morning while the mountains yet  
were gray,  
And the fetlocks of our horses splashed in dew along  
the way,  
Ere the sun was in the saddle for the half-way house  
of day,  
And we rode to Mooimeisjes in the morning.

There was Jim and I and Kafir Jack and all the other  
boys,  
And we waked the kloofs in echo to our laughter and  
our noise,  
For we sloughed the cares of living as we doffed our  
corduroys,  
To ride to Mooimeisjes in the morning.

Oh, the little sun-swamped hollow where the little  
village lay !

Mooimeisjes, where we are gathered, workers all, to  
take our play ;

And it lent its patch of purple to our leaden everyday,  
When we rode to Mooimeisjes in the morning.

But I mind me of a morning that was misty-like and  
drear,

When the earth was sick with sadness, and there  
droned upon the ear

The rumble and the thunder of the gun-wheels in the  
rear,

As we rode to Mooimeisjes in the morning.

There was Jim and I and Kafir Jack and each one did  
his share,

Till we saw the rooftrees blazing where our gentle  
memories were ;

And I know, despite our handiwork, our hearts were  
over there,

With crippled Mooimeisjes in the morning.

## AN ANSWER.

YESTERDAY you had a song  
I could not but choose but hear,  
'Twas *Oh, to be in England*  
*Now that April's there!*  
But I have found a new refrain  
I cannot choose but sing,  
'Tis *Oh, to be in Africa*  
*Now Summer's on the wing!*

Yesterday we languished  
For loaded boughs of may,  
And largesse of the hawthorn  
That April flings away;  
But foundering in the sunset,  
To watch the kopjes melt,  
And see the wacht-a-bitje bloom  
That gleams across the veldt.

Yesterday we yearned for  
The breath of English fields,  
The note of life triumphant  
That English April yields.  
But I've a longing for the kloofs  
Where red-plumed aloes stand,  
And calling to my heart I hear  
My Foster-Mother-Land.

## THE DEAD MAN.

THERE lies a corpse in the open,  
And the blood dries on the stones,  
For I shot once to drop my man,  
And again to still his groans.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
But I dared not hear his groans.

His lips went blue and heavy,  
And the light leaked from his eyes.  
All grew still about him  
Save the drip, drip, drip, and the flies.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
The thirsty hum of the flies!

Gray and green were underfoot  
And hot blue overhead,  
But the air and the earth and the sky  
seemed full  
Of the presence of the dead.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
The awful pomp of the dead.

There was blood on the points of the grasses,  
And thick blood at the roots,  
On the butt of the gun I shot him with,  
And splashes on my boots.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
His blood was on my boots.

I left him, dead and sprawling,  
Mantled with swarming flies,  
With the voiceless prayer on his features,  
For I could not close his eyes.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
But the horror of his eyes !

What cry was that in the stream bed,  
What wail from the rush-grown spruit ?  
Surely a ghoulish carrion-fowl,  
For my dead man lies mute.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
So limp he lies and mute.

What eyes were those in the tree shade,  
That grew in the air and blazed ?  
Nought but the eyes of a ravening beast  
For my dead man's are glazed.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
So empty and so glazed.



What crossed the drift behind me  
And followed up the hill ?  
Only a lion that snuffs the blood,  
For my dead man lies still.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
So dreadful and so still !

What breath was that on my forehead  
That blew in the still of the sun ?  
The breath, it may be, of a waking breeze,  
For my dead man has none.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
For my dead man has none.

What claps me on the shoulder,  
As it would have me come ?  
Only the twig of a drooping branch,  
For my dead man lies numb.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
So loose he lies and numb.

What hand shows there in the heavens,  
Spanning the clouds and the light ?  
'Tis the radiant track of a straying beam,  
For my dead man's are tight.

Lord, have mercy upon us ;  
He clutched and shut them tight.

What dread is cold upon me,  
What doubt has me in thrall?  
No fear of death or after death,  
For my dead man knows all.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
For I have shown him all.

What sound comes up with the evening  
As though it toned a knell?  
It may be a voice or a fever-dream,  
But my dead man could tell.

Lord, have mercy upon us,  
He knows and he could tell.

## TO A BOER LEADER.

We have spared to use the rifle when ye ran in  
broken herds,  
We have spared the voice of triumph—spare ye now  
the bitter words!  
Ours the conquest, but we veiled it ; ours the song  
and we were dumb,  
That the Peace we wooed in battle unreluctantly  
should come.  
Have we wreathed disdainful laurels, forced the  
homage of the knee ?  
Wrenched from death an utmost trophy to adorn our  
victory ?  
Or, ambassadors for progress, waged we war that war  
might cease,  
Striving still to vanquish strife, as courtly cavaliers of  
peace ?  
  
All your bullets could not check us—will you stay us  
now with speech,  
Opening hostile lips in warfare while ye close the  
Mauser breech ?

“Though our flag shall fly no longer, still our stern traditions stand !”

Is it thus ye teach the people while ye offer us the hand ?  
Nigh three years ye fought in honour, warding off the bitter end ;

Long enough to fight with Britain ; time enough to call her friend.

Bold indeed ye were to face her, eye to eye and brow to brow ;

Where you braved our fire in silence, will you need the muzzle now ?

Empires ran to call us comrade, but our mates were ever few ;

Britain's friendship ! How they sought it, and we offer it to you ;

Give it freely, bid you take it, hawk it at your very door,

Casting down what kings petitioned on the threshold of the Boer.

Dare ye leave it unaccepted, this the greatest gift of earth,

When upon your very bodies we have proved its priceless worth ?

'Tis a lien upon the future, empery of all the South ;  
And you'd cast the guerdon from you, with a bitter word of mouth !

## CONVALESCENCE.

THE sun has kissed me on the brow,  
The gentle morning lends me breath :  
I feel like Lazarus of old,  
Whom Jesus raised from death.

And all the Spring's reviving green,  
Ambitious of an early bloom,  
Is hand-in-hand with me to-day,  
Uprising from the tomb.

Ah, had you cloistered been like me,  
A denizen of aching dark,  
You'd see a rose on every bush,  
In every bird a lark.

For I have dwelt alone with fear,  
And I had taken pain to wife ;  
So now I quaff in eager draughts  
The heady wine of life.

Dear world, restore me to thy breast,  
The mother-breast for which I yearned,  
Thy child that strayed away with death,  
Thy Prodigal returned.

## KOMANI.

RUNS Komani ever ?  
Weep the willows still ?  
Gleam the grass-fires nightly  
Wreathed upon the hill ?  
Comes the summer singing ?  
Tiptoes yet the spring ?  
Tell me of Komani—  
Tell me everything.

For yonder by Komani  
I left my lady fair,  
Who smiled for ever under  
Her aureole of hair—  
Smiled and would not hearken,  
Heard and would not smile.  
I turned me from Komani  
A long and weary while.

Often by Komani  
I heard my lady's name  
Amid the tinkling ripples,  
And is it still the same ?  
Or goes Komani voiceless  
Where music used to be,  
Forgetful of my lady,  
As once she was of me ?

## KOODOO OUTSPAN.

WE were camped at Koodoo Outspan,  
Lay in laager all night long,  
Heard the river strive and bluster  
And the frogs in chorus strong ;  
Kaffir Jack was singing with them  
Some forgotten gutter-song—  
Something crude and old and ugly,  
Some poor spirit's mean conceit—  
And the burden of the singing  
Was remembrance bitter-sweet—  
Visions of the lighted windows,  
Echoes of the ringing street.  
So we listened, each responding  
To the sorry singer's call,  
Wanton hearts and souls of quiet ;  
But one symbol ordered all,  
Voiced in that uncouth evangel  
Of the London music-hall.  
Old remembrance yoked us down,  
Clinkered years to flame were fanned,  
Till we heard the women's voices  
And the cadence of the band,  
Till we saw the crowded pavement  
And the lights along the Strand.

In the dwindling, dying chorus  
Memory found a counterpart ;  
Every note that edged a discord  
Was a peg to hang a heart ;  
Ghosts of foundered promise answered  
To the Cockney's tinkered art.

So we lay at Koodoo Outspan,  
Lay and pondered all night long,  
And the placid night was troubled  
With a murmured plaint of wrong ;  
Earth gave back a mournful echo  
To the blatant gutter-song.

---

JIM.

FROM the Kei to Umzimkulu  
We chartered to ride,  
But before we reached Umtata  
Jim turned in and died.  
By Bashee I buried Jim.  
Ah, but I was fond of him,  
An' but for the niggers grinning,  
I'd—yes, I'd have cried.



*Jim*

'Twas a weary trek through Griqualand,  
And me all alone ;  
Three teams and a dozen niggers  
To boss on my own.  
And I felt a need for Jim ;  
It was just the job for him,  
Hazin' the teams and the niggers,  
Hard grit to the bone.

I lost a load at Kokstad :  
An axle fell through ;  
I hadn't heart to tinker it,  
So pushed on with two.  
If I'd only had old Jim !  
Axles never broke with him ;  
But I never could handle waggons  
Like Jim used to do.

I came to Umzimkuku  
With a pain in my head ;  
I ought to ha' bought med'cine,  
But I liquored instead :  
Never used to drink with Jim ;  
There's a girl that asked for him,  
But the jackals root at Bashee,  
An' Jim, he's dead !

## BLUE PETER.

GOOD-BYE, chum !

It's hard to part, but it had to come ;  
And you'll think of your mate a little yet  
When the pilot's dropped and the watch is  
set,  
Won't you, chum ?

Good luck, friend !

I always knew it was bound to end,  
For the voyages together we said should be  
Are not for the likes of you and me ;  
So fair winds, friend.

So long, mate !

We were lucky to meet, and this is fate ;  
Life had never a lot to spare  
For sailormen, and I've had my share  
In you, my mate.

## ON THE HILLTOP.

LAY the basket tenderly,  
Gently, sweetheart mine ;  
Sink the sun and whelm the world,  
But never jolt the wine ;  
Never jolt the wine, love,  
Grape or better brew ;  
Never mar the joys that are,  
But seize the hour's due.

Sit you where the grasses  
May rustle in your ears,  
And red-cockaded aloes  
Stand round like grenadiers—  
Swaggering grenadiers, love,  
That nod to you and me,  
And seem to say, " If that's your way,  
It is as it should be !"

Yon's the world beneath us,  
Sour and stale and gray,  
Like a sorry vintage  
We opened yesterday—  
Opened yesterday, love,  
Poured and drank our fill;  
But though we quaffed a brimming draught  
The lees are with us still.

Leave the dregs awhile, then,  
Leave the world below,  
And smile upon the serious way  
The serious people go—  
The silly serious people, love,  
Our merry fiend reviles;  
Because they grow so fat on woe  
They cannot climb to smiles.

See, over the horizon,  
The radiance leaking through,  
And mark the little baby cloud  
That sails athwart the blue—  
The opal and the blue, love,  
On feathery-silver wings,  
As though to ply 'twixt earth and sky  
With sweet imaginings.

There a breeze goes skipping,  
Truant from the sea,  
Flirting with the tree-tops,  
Fickle wooer he—  
Swift and ready wooer, love,  
First-born child of joy ;  
Pass the fame and dare the shame :  
Love's the only ploy !

I'm the great cock-angel  
The Masters always saw,  
And you're the little lily thing  
That Lippo meant to draw—  
Fra Lippo meant to draw, love,  
And surely Lippo knew  
The groping mind of human kind,  
The Prior's niece—and you !

Heaven's on the hilltop,  
Heaven's yours and mine,  
Throned and glad and glorious—  
But gently with the wine ;  
Gently with the wine, love !  
This my toast shall be :  
“ May you live a thousand years,  
And die of love for me ! ”

## BUSHMAN PAINTINGS.

THE armed mimosas throng to hide  
    The gapped hillside,  
Where, shrined below the grim berg's heart,  
There burgeoned fitfully and died  
    An olden art.

The velvet darkness like a pall  
    Withholds it all,  
But where the torches leap and gleam  
Lives suddenly upon the wall  
    A frantic dream.

Wonderful figures swarm upon the stone,  
    Like brown leaves strown  
Athwart some upland slope of windy veldt :  
Live as the flame creates them, whirled and  
    blown,  
Swim forth and melt.

Whelmed hosts that scatter at the charge and  
fly,  
Or stand to die,  
Exultant armies, steeped in battle-red,  
The hurricane of mace and assegai,  
The trodden dead.

Long buried loves thrown off the years' restraint,  
Eager and quaint,  
Battling to strip their age-old garb of gloom,  
Immortal by this witchery of paint,  
Waifs of the tomb.

And from the shadow tortured faces rise  
With dreadful eyes ;  
Red-handed spectres straying from their pain,  
Seeking with sullen hate that never dies  
Their dead again.

Here the low huts are floating on the grain  
That waves the plain,  
And here are cattle pastured to the knees.  
Peace broods unfretted o'er the still domain  
And prosperous ease.

Lo, 'tis a world that crowds the rugged wall ;  
The cavern small

By virtue of this wonderwork is rife,  
Like the arched purlieus of a kingly hall,  
    With pulsing life.

And what of him who, dreaming here alone  
    Upon the stone,  
Contrived a magic 'mid the shadows dim  
To thus immortalize a life long flown—  
    Ay, what of him?

Life was a niggard, grudging him a part,  
    And in his heart  
He strove for freedom 'neath his load of wrong ;  
God, for his weakness, armoured him with art,  
    And he was strong.

Hated and hunted, murderously sought,  
    The artist wrought,  
Drawing the gloom about him like a hood,  
Abject, but godlike in the instant thought  
    That all was good.

Doomed and abhorred, inured to crawl and cower,  
    This was his dower :  
To build a world apart, and, throned on high,  
To hold the splendour of a crowded hour,  
    Shrined for the eye.



See his battalions swarm at his behest  
Behind his crest !  
See how his Amazulu foemen give and fall !  
See life and dreamland yield him of their best,  
Tyrant of all !

Painting enraptured on the studied stroke,  
Like a cast cloak  
Fear and affliction from his shoulders fell.  
There died the savage, here the artist woke,  
Answering the spell.

Is this not great, to hold a potent charm  
That guards from harm  
All that in man approaches the sublime,  
Folding the spirit with a mighty arm,  
Immune from time ?

His was the gift to know and love the best,  
And so divest  
A partial glory of its grosser part,  
Prizing alike the guerdon and the quest ;  
And this is art.

Weakest of men, shaped newly from the clod,  
This friend of God,  
This woodland orphan, kin to every beast,  
Of all who down the aisles of laurel trod  
Was not the least.

Glance at his picture, floating as on air :  
    That was a prayer,  
A clutch at God, an offering humbly spent,  
And for the soul of him who wrought it there  
    A sacrament.

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TABLE MOUNTAIN.

THE Mountain fronts the city and the sea,  
Serene, inscrutable, with patient brow,  
A monument to unremembered times,  
To loves and losses long forgotten now,  
And pregnant with the morrow's mystery.

Here, ere the earth was old, its level crest  
Looked down on tranquil beaches yet untrod,  
Held high dominion o'er the hollow deep  
Ere ever Israel's clans were lost to God,  
And saw the eagles gathering in the west.

And wind-bound galleons, edging off the shore,  
Armadas heading for uncharted seas,  
Beheld the Mountain, frowning from afar,  
Serene above the rain-beladen breeze,  
And marked an omen in the face it wore.

All things the Mountain knoweth and hath seen,  
From that first dawn when God said, 'It is good !'  
Down through the years. The brief usurping days  
Passed in review before it where it stood ;  
All earth and ocean were its wide demesne.

Brother, when thou and I, in course of years,  
Are gathered to our fathers and forgot,  
Yon iron head will stand immovable,  
As in the days when thou and I were not,  
A mute memorial of our joys and tears.

JAN VAN RIEBECK.

WHERE the mountain, level-crested, holds the moon  
in long eclipse,  
Where the waters, lover-hearted, lingered at the city's  
lips,  
Where the lighted windows beckon to the lanterns on  
the ships ;

Where along the dockside tethered ride the vessels in  
array,  
Brown and scarred with heavy weather, white and  
worn with wayward spray,  
Hither came Mynheer van Riebeck, from the Maas  
to Table Bay.

Lonely shore and desert beaches, woods that fringed  
the waters' rim,  
Sad, unhomely ! And above it frowned the mountain  
dour and grim ;  
Ay, it all seemed very hopeless. Had it any hopes  
for him ?

Did he ponder ere he landed, with an angry heart and  
sore,  
“ Here’s the place to bury honour ; here is failure’s  
open door,”  
Or, with faith and brisk rejoicing, did he straightway  
go ashore ?

But, methinks, I see him building, earnest heart and  
busy hand ;  
One by one the little houses rise along the yellow  
strand,  
Till a little township clusters where the galleons make  
the land.

And amid the low mimosas, stealing higher day by  
day,  
Grows the Kerk, God’s house in exile, where the  
sturdy burghers pray,  
While the fort, squat-walled and warlike, hurls its  
menace o’er the bay,

And the mothers and the maidens—I can see them at  
their toil,  
Coaxing into fruitful service little plots of savage  
soil,  
With an anxious eye to noonday, lest the dinner chance  
to spoil.

And amongst them, helping, guiding, to and fro on  
eager feet,  
Here a word to check the wayward, there a smiling  
nod to greet,  
Father, pastor, and commander, goes the Surgeon of  
the Fleet.

Till at length below the mountain, where the thorn-  
mimosas grew,  
Stood the town amid its gardens, with the water  
running through,  
And the guns upon the ramparts, where the flag of  
Holland flew.

Then he set himself to govern, dealt the law as best  
might be,  
Drove his holding further inland from the village by  
the sea,  
Served with straight and due obedience, under God,  
the Company.

Thus Van Riebeck laid the keystone ; and, I wonder,  
did he guess,  
“ Shall my handiwork bring honour ? Have I striven  
to success ? ”  
Surely in the winds and waters God Himself would  
answer, “ Yes.”

At the dawning of dominion Jan van Riebeck looked  
to noon,  
Strove for Africa's awaking, asking God no other  
boon  
Save, lest he should never see it, that his tree might  
blossom soon.

Better than the golden harvest, better than the  
burdened tree,  
Was the sowing of Van Riebeck for an empire yet to  
be,  
When the sturdy flag of Holland was the master of  
the sea.

## SEA-FARERS.

THE steamers that put from the Clyde,  
And the whalers that sail from Dundee,  
Go forth in their season on top of the tide  
To gather the grist of the sea,  
To ply in the lanes of the sea.

By fairway and channel and sound,  
By shoal and deep water they go,  
Guessing the course by the feel of the ground  
Or chasing the drift of the floe,  
Nor'west in the track of the floe.

And we steer them to harbours afar,  
At hazard we win them abroad,  
Where the coral is furrowed by keels on the bar,  
And the sea-floor is swept by the Lord,  
The anchorage dredged by the Lord.



By the placid, palm-skirted bayou,  
By coasts that are drear and forlorn,  
We follow the courses the Admirals drew  
In the days when they doubled the Horn,  
When Drake lost a month off the Horn.

And what of the cargo ye bring  
For the venture ye bore overseas?  
What of the treasure ye set forth to wring  
At peril of billow and breeze,  
In spite of the billow and breeze?

Oh! we carry the keys of the earth,  
And the password of empire we bear;  
Wherever the beaches held tokens of worth  
We 'stablished your sovereignty there,  
We planted your flag over there.

And the guerdon for blood ye have shed?  
The glory that haloes your name?  
Oh! a grave where the dipsey is dim overhead,  
And the rudderless echo of fame,  
A chip from the flotsam of fame.

## THE VELDT.

CAST the window wider, sonny ;  
Let me see the veldt  
Rolling grandly to the sunset  
Where the mountains melt,  
With the sharp horizon round it,  
Like a silver belt.

Years and years I've trekked across it,  
Ridden back and fore,  
Till the silence and the glamour  
Ruled me to the core :  
No man ever knew it better ;  
None could love it more.

There's a balm for crippled spirits  
In the open view,  
Running from your very footsteps  
Out into the blue,  
Like a waggon track to heaven,  
Straight 'twixt God and you.

There's a magic, soul-compelling,  
In the boundless space,  
And it grows upon you, sonny,'  
Like a woman's face,  
Passionate and pale and tender,  
With a marble grace.

There's the sum of all religion  
In its mightiness ;  
Wingèd truths, beyond your doubting,  
Close about you press.  
God is greater in the open ;  
Little man is less.

There's a voice pervades its stillness,  
Wonderful and clear ;  
Tongues of prophets and of angels,  
Whispering far and near,  
Speak an everlasting gospel  
To the spirit's ear.

There's a sense you gather, sonny,  
In the open air ;  
Shift your burden ere it break you :  
God will take His share.  
Keep your end up for your own sake ;  
All the rest's His care.

There's a promise, if you need it,  
For the time to come ;  
All the veldt is loud and vocal  
Where the Bible's dumb.  
Heaven's paved with gold for parsons,  
But it's grassed for some.

There's a spot I know of, sonny,  
Yonder by the stream ;  
Bushes handy for the fire,  
Water for the team.  
By the old home outspan, sonny,  
Let me lie and dream.

## VOICES OF THE VELDT.

PIET COETZEE, *loquitur*.

LAND ! I will show you land ; mile upon mile  
Of ridge and kopje, bush and candid waste,  
Sun-drowned and empty, tacit as the sea,  
Belted about with the horizon line  
That saws the clouds ; gray, green, and brown,  
And over all the blank and curving sky.  
Is it not still ? And with the sacred calm  
Of cool church shadows, where one speaks and moves  
As though God spied upon one ; and all things—  
Trespassing sunbeams, spiders, swarming motes,  
The profile of a woman at her prayers,  
The tang that rules the sermon, one's own thoughts—  
Go bowed below a dread significance.  
You know the feeling ; but the veldt, my veldt,  
Is more than any church, more vastly still  
Than gray cathedrals drowsing down the years,  
More fraught with solemn meanings and dim dreams

Than any storied hive of shaveling saints.  
Still, did I say? Well, still it surely is,  
And yet it hath a voice, its mood of sound,  
As prophets, meanly meditating, start  
From torpor into fired utterance.  
On its occasion it will speak in tones  
That thundered first of all on Sinai.  
The voice of all the world and all the sky  
Poured through the tempest-trumpet, and, between  
The drum, of sullen strength and passion's shrill,  
Riding above the thunder and the wind,  
There comes at last the still small voice of God.  
And it will speak sometimes, far off and clear,  
Aloof, unflushed, ungilded, calm, superb,  
The voice of angels at the judgment-seat,  
Impartial, cold exponents of the law.  
And then it chants! O morning stars in song,  
O hills in choir triumphant, ringing earth,  
And dome of shuddering echoes, hush and hear!  
It has the anthem laid upon its lips  
Which all creation sang at the seventh dawn,  
And God heard, smiling, saying: 'It is good.'  
And in wild breezes, ere the timid Spring  
Quite flings her draperies apart, and dares  
Her naked foot of blessing on the turf,  
Her naked breast of promise on the air,  
It pipes, like that goat-footed god of Greece

Beside his stream, pillowed on life itself,  
And sometimes like the potent piper who  
Charmed hell to hush its dreary agony.  
Ay, it has music. Ere I stood as high  
As that big bleating rascal mid the ewes  
(A sjambok's badly needed in the kraal),  
I had long parley when the sun came up,  
And when he smouldered down with nameless  
things,

With souls set free of earth and gracious ghosts  
Yet due to earth, with things unborn and dead,  
With God and other gods, and something kin  
To Satan, and he spoke me best of all.  
You say you dream, too ; that is why I tell  
Just what I feel and what I'm sure I know.  
A heathen ! I, an elder of the Kerk !  
Well, I'll not plead. It seems so clear to me  
That as God in His image fashioned man,  
So is the soul of nature of His soul,  
The voice of nature to His accent tuned.  
A heathen, that I love the vocal veldt !  
Well, heathen let it be.

Yes, that's the house,  
With thatch the colour of the mellow earth ;  
My homestead, and it ought to frame my life  
(You'll say), and clip the picture at the verge,  
Just where the scene leans to pure excellence.

Those are the kraals below it, where my boys  
Have habitation, creatures of my soil,  
My free-tongued serfs, my merry-minded slaves,  
The dusty sons of dust that dog their dam,  
Bleating to suckle, hanging at the teat,  
New born of earth, yet earthy, heart and head,  
And the soul muddy from the moulding-box.  
A pretty house ! Well, when I broke the sod  
To lay its base I had no thought at all  
Of fair proportion—built not for the eye,  
But rather for the weather—but I toiled  
From plans my mind held, and the mind was wise  
In subtle structures of the crag and knoll,  
In easy contours of the kop and kranz,  
And knew the background, klip and kloof and spruit,  
That I must set my house in. Well, it grew,  
Not evilly, but modestly, and apt  
To its great neighbourhood, the solemn hills,  
The tortured boulders and the jostling bush,  
And deferential to the eternal veldt.  
You see its windows underneath the eaves  
Over the stoep, darkling like dying eyes,  
And that one touch of colour at the door,  
Like blood on patient lips ? Not of design,  
Not of deliberate craft or skill of mine,  
Things grew to fitness ; till the house at length  
Was like a man that battles not with God,



Nor with God's world, but yields below the law,  
And schools himself to strengthen yet the strong,  
And supplement the force of the machine.  
So the veldt guides me, pulses in the blood,  
Quickens the arm and clogs the clucking tongue,  
And planes the purpose to a sober mean.  
I tell you, friend, that freedom of the soul  
Dwells in the soul's compulsion : we  
Are most enfranchised when God fetters us,  
Or sets the yoke of something great to guide,  
As this great veldt does guide and govern me.  
I am with him who saw (that Shakespeare's man)  
On everything a holy text engraved,  
In everything God's finger scribing plain.  
A heathen ! Ay, we heathen only know  
The little value of old tales retold,  
The small avail of ancient miracles,  
And the great worth of God's own testimony.  
You'll come to coffee ? There's a kind of thanks,  
A grace bestowed, a hospitality  
In suffering little benefits. You'll come ?  
The Tante sees few folks these later days,  
And loves to make a business of a guest.  
We Boers, you know, or, rather, you are told,  
Are rugged people, parted from the beasts  
In that we go in clothes, and work and pray.  
Come once and try us. Need has pared away

Much of the harness of the city life,  
And if equipment's wanting here and there,  
The toys of luxury but few and worn,  
You'll find the ancient tools in good repair  
With which man ploughs his pathway through the  
world.

And, come to think of it, 'tis scarcely hard  
Or ill-befallen that a man should pay,  
With none but Nature's currency, his debt,  
Purchase, with sweat and muscle-strain, his bread,  
Ransome his life with healthy eye and hand,  
Build up his throne with honesty and faith.  
Ay, gold can do it, but it does not give  
The relish of achievement ; does not teach  
A man to be a king ; does not confer  
God's privilege to say that it is good.  
Think ! Ere I ran alone, I saw the men  
Laager the waggons hurriedly and stand  
To outface death and torture, cheat black doom  
With a mere ecstasy of courage, scoff  
While all the kloofs sent kaffirs out in clouds  
And seething volumes, and the hills were crowned  
With assegais. I saw that fight,  
And watched my father smiling o'er the sights  
And crooning to himself as he dealt death ;  
I sat beside my mother where she crouched  
Loading the guns and handing them, and played

At marbles with the bullets, till she paused  
 And looked upon me gravely. Then she smiled  
 And kissed me once, and bade me still be good.  
 And so, kissing and smiling, lapsed from life  
 The only warrior of us all that fell.  
 It sets a newer mark on life and death,  
 A cheaper price, a memory like that,  
 And discounts much a man is prone to love.  
 This is the Vrouw Coetzee ; Katje, *mij vriend*  
*Will kaffee trink bij ons ; is all toe recht ?*

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### LITTLE THINGS.

THERE never grew a flower yet  
 But where a flower ought to grow ;  
 THERE never strove an eager stream  
 But where a stream was due to flow :  
 Our world was ordered even so.

THERE never fell a sparrow yet  
 But there was need that it should die ;  
 No shred of cloud goes wafting up  
 But has its errand in the sky,  
 Its great or little craft to ply.

There never grew a sorrow yet  
But served its purpose in the heart ;  
There comes no pain with empty hands  
And nought of healing in its smart :  
Life's little things must play their part.

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THE VOORLOOPERS.

THEY hasten to their heritage,  
The guerdon of their days,  
To labour long and wearily  
For scanty gold or praise ;  
To toil unseen and overmuch,  
And if their meed be fame,  
To carve themselves an epitaph  
To mark their place and name.

They hasten to their heritage,  
The right to bridge and build,  
To serve among the journeymen,  
To suffer with the guild ;  
To plan the work and found it fair,  
And ere 'tis gable-high,  
To pass the trowel to the next,  
And turn aside to die.

They hasten to their heritage,  
The tender and the tried ;  
Each tide beholds them outward bound,  
God wot, the field is wide.  
They bring the best of heart and hand,  
Of blood, and breed, and birth ;  
Their graves upon our frontiers lie  
To testify their worth.

They hasten to their heritage,  
The feeble and the fain ;  
They bring the best of youth and hope  
To garner age and pain,  
To glean the dole of little thanks,  
To suffer and be dumb,  
To die when duty names the man—  
And still their cohorts come !

## THE HOBNAILED TROUBADOUR.

LET us hence from the throttle of streets,  
The lean-throated life,  
And the barren unrest,  
And the turbulent riot that cheats  
The heart in the breast,  
With its pantomime aping of strife.  
It is war in the town—  
Always war, and no aim in the fray.  
Men frown,  
Men bluster and bray,  
And a madness is lord of the day.  
'Tis a profitless while  
Since the wind had his will of my hair,  
And I saw the earth smile  
Like a child  
Exulting in rapturous air,  
And the wild  
Slim grasses brush cheeks by the river,  
Like virgins a-quiver  
Because a boy-breeze took his path  
By their tree-cloistered bath.

I will roam  
To my love in the wilderness dwelling,  
Who waits  
Till my voice at her gates  
Shall be telling :  
“ I am home, I am home ! ”

There's a road that runs clear to the sky,  
And tangles and loops  
Like a braid on the breasts of the hills,  
And clammers on high,  
Then poises and swoops  
To the ramparted valley that stills  
The song of the rock-channelled streams ;  
And dawdles and dreams  
'Twixt mimosa and aloe and gum,  
And it calls me to come.  
So forth, then, I fare,  
A troubadour, hobnailed, but free  
As a ghost of the air.  
The sign of the beautiful star  
Through the fret of a tree,  
Where the tongues of the wilderness are,  
Is the hostel for me.  
As a red jewel glows  
In an opulent midnight of hair,  
My wood-fire throws

Hot eyes on the night, and it guides  
Poor brethren to share  
What largesse the hour provides.  
And its incense in wreaths  
Swims up and about, and bequeaths  
Strong memories, graved in the brain,  
That shall call me again.

I am done with the market and highway,  
    With trinket and gaud,  
And the trail of the leopard is my way  
    That leads me abroad.  
The spoor of the buck shall bestow me  
    In woodlands afar,  
And the hovering eagle shall show me  
    The house of the star.  
I will dwell with the bountiful morning,  
    And fare with the best,  
A troubadour fearlessly scorning  
    The place of a guest,  
A singer new come from the cities,  
    Who shames not to bring  
No song but the bell-echo ditties  
    The waterfalls sing,  
No news but the scandalous rumours  
    Of white-collared crows,  
No jest but the honeymoon humours  
    The flame-blossom knows.



I will come to my love in her bower,  
To the garden where gladness is rife,  
Astride of the golden-shod hour,  
Standing up in the stirrups of life.

Staff in hand and leathern scrip  
On my hip,  
And a tune upon my tongue  
Never sung,  
Till I woke the nested echoes with my  
carol of the road,  
The maiden hills among ;

With the chances that betide  
For my guide,  
Gentle fortune for my friend,  
So I wend  
By the paths of dream and story, through  
the land of old romance,  
To my journey's pleasant end.

And the welcome where I come  
Is a hum  
Of the bee-choir ; even so  
When I go  
I walk between a chorusing of welcome  
and farewell,  
Musical and low.

The forests loose a whisper to the wind :

“ Life is kind,”

The flowers don their coronets to tell :

“ It is well

In the woodland and the upland, on the mountain  
and the plain,

In the thicket and the fell.”

I meet the loaded breezes coming bent

Down with scent ;

The dashing free-companions of the air

Stay to bear

All the sweets of wastrel Summer, all the leavings  
of the Spring,

And Autumn's mellow ware.

The sap is fresh and wakeful in the tree,

And in me

Wakes rejoicing for the splendour and the  
worth

Of the earth,

Brimming over with the future, loud with promise  
as she waits

For the great to-morrow's birth.

Sing no more of laurelled glory,  
Sing no more  
Ardent tale nor ancient story  
As of yore.  
Set a song upon the breeze  
Of the grassland and the trees,  
And the miles of pearly morning and the open road  
before.

Wake no more the flame and thrilling,  
Ne'er again  
Loose the slogan-bugles, filling  
All the brain :  
I will hearken to the voice  
When the unseen birds rejoice,  
And the mountains sing together with an echoing  
refrain.

Bit no more the great war-stallions  
For the raid,  
Never call the grim battalions  
To their trade :  
I will gird me for the fray  
'Twixt the darkness and the day,  
When the night leads up her lances and the  
morning swings the blade.

Let all be—the lust and madness !

Let all be.

I am rich in love and gladness,

I am free

As the butterflies and bees.

Fellow-citizen of these,

Welcome guest in wayside lodges, is there aught  
beyond for me ?

## THE NUN.

MAIDEN of the convent close  
Within the ivied wall,  
Say, hast thou never kissed in dreams  
Or ever kissed at all ?

The waxen lilies by thy path  
Are lovers every one,  
White wantons to the gallant spring,  
Handmaidens of the sun.

And not the meekest breeze that blows  
Thy cloistered garden through  
But has some blossom for a bride,  
Or poisoning bud to woo.

Ah ! virgin heart, why thus alone  
This pulsing Easter morn,  
Amid the lyric pageantry,  
Goest loveless and forlorn ?

For in those grave great eyes I saw  
A rebel light unfold  
The sad potential Magdalen  
That all sweet women hold.

## MIMOSA.

THE bloom of the mimosa  
Between your lips and me  
Withholds you like a lattice  
Of golden filigree.

The thorns of the mimosa  
Between your breast and me  
Are like the blades of vengeance  
That guard the Eden tree.

The breach in the mimosa  
That gives your lips to me  
Is like the breath of blessing  
That sets the spirit free.

The scent of the mimosa  
That rains on you and me  
Is like a dear remembrance  
Of bliss that used to be.

### A PERSONAL NOTE.

I WONDER if you've noticed in your time  
How greatness runs to seed ; and how a man—  
Having within him something past the crowd,  
Some leaven of the force you nickname God,  
A spark, a drop, an atom of the stuff  
That having made the world will break it yet—  
May merge his self within the sea of fools,  
Nor ever loose his power on a prey.  
I knew a man who loitered through the world,  
Patronized time and smiled at opportunity,  
A bland Adonis foining fortune off,  
A kindly, ornamental gentleman.  
He handled time as, lonely in a room,  
A longing novice takes the Master's brush  
And dares a line upon his imagery :  
Nothing at all to see, nor stain, nor gain,  
But something shared with one who's sure of fame.  
So with a light forefinger did my friend  
Just put his casual impress on the time,

Bettering it not a whit, nor soiling him.  
He faced affairs inscrutably ; ignored  
The sucking currents swirling from the feet  
Of little men who jumped at immortality ;  
Baffled the tendency of urgent hours,  
And served the general purpose of a Sphinx.  
Few people knew him, and the most of those  
Conceived him valueless, or at the best  
Mildly unprofitable, like old-fashioned gear  
One's father added to the furniture.  
But there were one or two, and of them I,  
Who leaned upon him, loved him, worshipped  
    him,  
Holding his place beneath the lee of life  
Like the serene aloofness of a God.  
We knew the silken strength his calm contained,  
Unscabbarded the falchion of his thought,  
And we were rich in what he would not give,  
And loved him for the love which he withheld.  
I never fancied I should find a man  
Whose mere existence could have such a force  
To rule my life, set reason on the lathe,  
And dovetail spirit to humanity.

Say what you will—you've high authority—  
Your life is raw material to your hand,  
And yours it is to shape it handsomely,

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Or sturdily, or vilely, as you please,  
And chiefly it depends upon your palate.  
If you've a mind to thrive in certain ways,  
You turn it to a plague to infest the world  
And pockmark every wretch it touches on.  
Or else apprentice it to harlotry,  
To hawk for custom in the gutter-mud,  
Pitifully asking what it may not claim,  
Dully accepting buffet and caress.  
But there's another way to pass the time  
While time is with you, harmless at the worst,  
And deftly guided, subtly beautiful,  
Sinking the coarse-grained purpose of the hour,  
The cheap indemnity of need and mead,  
Make of your life a thing all beautiful :  
A jewel on the girdle of the day.  
Suffer the easy blame, the solemn scorn,  
Of such as root like swine for what the heaven  
Ne'er gave to earth. Placid and satisfied,  
Do you but set your gem to please your taste,  
And live upon your ũnearned fund of joy.  
So, like a picture shrined in Italy !  
Mellowed with years and worship and rich light,  
That rules its breathless generations still,  
Or like a gaud that dwells on beauty's breast,  
Drawing the eye to rest on marble curves,  
You spend no force but such as makes for good,

Peace and bright dreams and calm divinity.  
Then, rendering your jewel, when you must,  
To that grim footpad, Nature, in the end,  
You lapse your slender cares in this delight :  
“ I only held its frailty in my hand,  
I only joyed in life's virginity.”

That's not so dilettante as you'll think :  
There's matter in it if you have the spoon.  
But you, perhaps, still take things seriously :  
I'll not advise you then. Toss up for it !

## THE EXILES.

WATCH how the South-bound swallows go ;  
What manner of folk are they ?  
Out of the sky they came to you,  
Guests of a summer day,  
Born in your sheltering thatch, and bred  
A fortnight's flight away.

But when your days are warm and bright,  
And God shall lend them weather,  
Their schooled battalions take their flight,  
A thousand wings together ;  
Each year the native-born go back  
To flock with their own feather.

So, Mother-country, of thy sons  
A many man there be  
Whose lot hath cast them all abroad,  
Whose hearts have stayed with thee,  
Who yield thee praise from the skirts of the earth  
And the fringe of the nether sea.

England, behold ! Our arms are strong,  
Our shoulders broad to bear ;  
All that the aliens cast on thee,  
Our birthright 'tis to share ;  
And when thy legions face the field,  
The exiles will be there.

From every continent and sea  
Our fancies homeward fly ;  
Grant though we sojourned long abroad  
We all come home to die,  
Each like a native Englishman  
In English earth to lie.

## THE HARPER.

I HAVE a potion, bright as tears,  
Kind as death, strong as pain ;  
Reach me the harp, for the cup shall brim

And the years are piled in vain.  
Drink of the harper's wonder-brew,  
Pledge in a cup of honey-dew,  
Quaff, and the potion wakes for you  
Splendid days again.

I have a charm that is large as love,  
Little as life, old as woe ;  
Reach me the harp, and the sun shall stand,

Winds forbear to blow.  
List to the harper's magic song,  
Music buoyant, wild and strong,  
Born where the mountain birds belong  
And the ghosts of children go.

I have a balm that I stole from God,  
Soft as pity, sweet as truth ;  
Reach me the harp and I will heal  
Age and wrong and ruth.  
Take of the harper's unguent, sweet  
As Mary poured at Jesus' feet,  
Bright as the pool where the waters meet,  
Holy as hopes of youth.

### A MEETING.

THE street was muffled out of sight,  
And peering like a furtive ghost,  
The corner lamp had gashed the night  
And made a little isle of light,  
A misty atoll. Here I stood  
And watched the darkness swamp its coast  
In reeling tides of emptiness ;  
The moon was dead, and ravelled scud  
Usurped her heaven, like a tress  
Escaped upon a sombre cloak.  
The world was tongueless : not a tone  
Of life's far orchestra was rife ;  
No last faint drowsy whisper woke  
A drowsy echo ; on the stone,  
Marooned beneath the lamp alone,  
I seemed to compass all of life.  
And so I pondered, idly viewed  
From out my little lighted cell,  
My nowise barren solitude,  
My world, that I alone imbued  
With purpose, and I found it well.

And then I saw the banked night gape  
About my shore ; a woman came,  
And by my hermit island went.  
Above her head the staggering flame  
A swift uneasy radiance spent  
Upon her features and her shape.  
I saw no more than quiet eyes  
Set in a still and gentle face,  
Attuned to sober sympathy,  
A calm serenity of grace,  
That breathing note of purity  
Which springs from love—not otherwise.  
I think that for a moment's space  
I met her glance and held it, then  
The darkness drowned her ; from my ken  
She sank, and I was lone again.  
My friend, the least of little things  
Have purpose—if you say so, small  
As they themselves—but no one brings  
A bludgeon to a needle's task  
Where littleness is all in all.  
We know the swollen universe  
Is but a consequential mask  
For little causes which disperse  
The calm effects we label fate ;  
And you and I but vindicate  
The utmost atom's certain knack

Of building worlds, while ages hence  
Its worlds may founder on a word,  
Creation crumble into wrack,  
Because a fancy wrought offence  
And you apostrophized unheard.  
It may be, now, you'll understand  
Why still I cherish and retain  
The glance at midnight which I took,  
Like jetsam on my fretted strand,  
And shrine it still within my brain.  
A look—no word—a fleeting look  
The time vouchsafed us ; and in that  
I saw what I must treasure still—  
The cause untainted that begat  
The offspring of my captured will.  
And this I know : that all I wrought,  
Evil or good—for both are strong  
To multiply and spread—I caught  
That cheerless night, and they belong  
Only to her whose eyes I see  
Sometimes of evenings yet, and she  
Shall answer at the last for me.



## EVENING.

SINKS the sun in sullen glory where the mountains  
meet the sky,

Red and tragic, like the passing of some old and  
stricken king ;

Down the glades of sunbeams thrusting to the scarlet  
clouds on high,

Silent, sudden, winged with healing, comes the  
blessed evening.

Fretted, lustrous, opalescent, fire wars with climbing  
fire,

Worlds in ruin glow and smoulder, crumbling in  
the golden flood ;

Black the trees, like naked mourners, lift lean arms  
about the pyre,

Red the mountains, swamped in splendour, triumph  
in their robes of blood.

Lower, lower, dying slowly, dying strongly, falls the  
sun ;

Springs of radiance, eager fountains gushing, bright-  
ness, round him well ;

Priestly breezes bear the unction, shades are kneeling  
one by one,  
Through the gates of darkness wafted faintly tones  
the passing bell.

Cloaked and shod with tender gloom, star-girdled,  
hooded, pacing slow,  
Like a pale and cloistered lady, thus the holy night  
draws on ;  
Voices of the veldt acclaim her, choiring plaintively  
and low,  
Earth beside her path is suppliant for her healing  
benison.

BROWNING, (EX-AFRICA).

O MASTER hand of poesy,  
So delicately skilled to win  
From out the human violin  
The very sense of gallantry,  
And chill refrains that drown the ear with  
    agony !

In all thy haunting minstrelsy,  
What is ours, who have no part  
In the heritage of art,  
In beauty's calm divinity,  
Save that we are kin to thy humanity ?

Dwellers in captivity,  
Seeking out with wistful eyne  
The silver-dim horizon line,  
Girdling round our boundary,  
Whence fancy passes forth to realms of  
    witchery.

Rapt voice of fantasy !  
What potion out of dreams distilled  
Informed thee with the craft to build  
These palaces of imagery,  
These golden lands aglow, this flood of  
pageantry,

That we, from cares of merchantry,  
Amid the city's thronging ways,  
May turn aside awhile to gaze  
On lovely languorous Italy,  
And all her grace of love and hue and  
melody ?

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## LAURELS.

THERE is a blazoned history  
That surges in my mind,  
Of pageant, love, and chivalry,  
That life has left behind ;  
Of olden fires, long eclipsed,  
That leave us cold and blind.

I read how this tall knight or that  
Rode forth at early light,  
And loaned his sword to every cause  
Of woe that sought its right,  
To prisoned maids and ladies fair,  
As should become a knight.

And death and brazen victory  
Alike incurred the gain  
Of flowery honour and the word  
Of praise that baffles pain,  
And none fought unavailingly,  
And no one died in vain.

So round the tale of quest and fray  
    The ready laurels wreathed,  
And o'er the biers of good dead men  
    The note of glory breathed,  
That to a later, littler life  
    Their plangent names bequeathed.

But this, in chief, I mark of them,  
    And troth, it makes me sigh :  
Such gallant trappings overlaid  
    The craft that they would ply,  
So much of drum and bugle-horn  
    To help them live and die.

Not hard, I think, for such as they  
    To be and prove the man,  
With sound embroidering the deed  
    As praise and music can,  
And 'twixt the toil and recompense  
    So brief the easy span.

The wreath, the lady and the prize !  
    Now here I count it blame  
That in their halls of chivalry  
    They shut the door of shame,  
Lest one should try his strength too far  
    And mar his knightly fame.

They went not forth as you and I,  
And many men beside,  
Who, deeming not of high desert,  
Their utmost prowess tried,  
Who, seeking but the instant gain,  
As men of valour died.

I hold him but a meagre soul  
Who dare not greatly fail,  
Who cannot grace the fustian coat  
But needs the ringing mail,  
And sets the hope of victory  
Above the Holy Grail.

Ah well ! they knew their business best,  
And ordered life to suit ;  
Timing their decorative steps  
To psaltery and lute,  
They went in pageant down to death  
And left the singers mute.

And this remains : their way was fair,  
But brief and narrow too,  
And passing ere the world was ripe,  
They left great things to do,  
Such tasks as Bayard might not dare,  
And Launcelot never knew.

Now every man in every time  
Has some dim-shrined quest,  
Some hope that fattens in lean years,  
Some love that drowns the rest ;  
And every one must bear the gage  
Of that he holds the best.

And if I strive at utmost cost  
To ends of honour fine,  
By meanest ways, by darkest paths,  
With never friend nor sign,  
Black brow to brow with hostile fate,  
The more of honour mine !

And if, o'ercome upon the road,  
A vanquished man I lie,  
With broken blade and miry crest  
It be my lot to die  
Uncomforted and unrenowned,  
No smirched fame have I.

For that I ventured forth afoot  
And lacking page and squire,  
Shall it be told at length of me  
My place was in the mire,  
And shall it not remembered be  
How far I did aspire ?



*What Need ?*

Not mine the grace of minstrelsy,  
The thrill of string and reed  
The sackbut and the clavicthern  
That bid the people heed  
There comes again a conqueror ;  
But mine will be the deed.

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## WHAT NEED ?

WHAT need of all these verses,  
This sugar-refuse speech,  
The blessings and the curses,  
The clink and clang of each ?  
What do you learn or teach ?

I have a need of verses  
To round my rough design  
Of music that immerses  
The pearl of thought in wine,  
And makes the draught divine.

What need of all this singing,  
The rhythm and the rhyme ?  
Must words go ranked and ringing  
The torpid soul to prime ?  
Must visions march in time ?

I have a need of singing,  
To give my thought its sky,  
To set it free and winging  
Where clouds and poems ply.  
'Tis dear to such as I.

What need of all this dreaming,  
My architect of air,  
The bubbles all esteeming  
But not the solid ware,  
Not things undraped and bare ?

I have a need of dreaming  
Of houses in the air :  
The crested walls and gleaming  
Are not of solid ware :  
How else should joy be there ?

## HOMEWARD BOUND

It's goodbye now to Africa, but kiss your hand again  
To the upland trek and the old trade road and kop and  
kloof and plain ;

There's another trek instead for us,  
And a long strange road ahead for us,  
But never the old home outspan, however the team  
may strain.

I'm thinking now of the lonely day when first I landed  
here ;

The clouds were down on the mountain—a rainy day  
and drear,

And in all the voices greeting us,  
And in all the people meeting us,  
There was never a soul to welcome me, and never  
a word of cheer.

And I'm thinking, too, of the long lean years and the  
uphill fight I made,

The good grim faith in the end of it and the footing  
dearly paid,

The joy and the pain and the vice of it,  
The loss and the gain and the price of it,  
And the jerrybuilt gods I trusted in and the darkling  
ways I strayed.

But all the same, I wouldn't forego the curious things  
I've seen,  
The roofless nights and foodless days and the purple  
in between.

It's over late to fret for it,  
And the world shall pay me yet for it,  
But the rough-and-tumble left me brown where the  
handshake found me green.

There are many things you come to see when the final  
crust is gone :  
The rotting souls of splendid men and truth with  
nothing on,  
Life and the sorry way of it,  
The world and the devious lay of it ;  
Only half of them honest brawn and the rest is what  
they don.

And it's fine to think, when you've time to think, of  
the wonderful things you do,  
With a grin for the worst, and a nod for the best, and  
grit to hold you to,  
Till you face your job and are one with it,  
Till you tackle your share and are done with it,  
Till you stand to the odds with an appetite and see the  
lost fight through.

It's soft we come and hard we go, and little enough we  
get,  
But we win a streak of ore within that will pan out  
colour yet.

With nothing in the hand and bluffing it,  
With nothing in the purse and roughing it,  
We play big stakes with Africa and leave the game in  
debt.

And now we're leaving Africa ! Oh, kiss your hand  
once more,

To the good old, tough old, grand old land that lies  
beyond the shore ;

And to-night, dear heart, we'll be dreaming of it,  
And to-morrow we'll be sad for the seeming of it :  
There's a life and a love astern of us, but Lord knows  
what before.

THE END.

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